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THOUGHTS

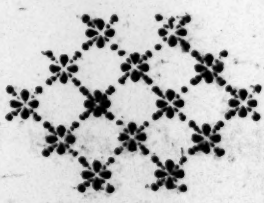
UPON

GOD'S

SOVEREIGNTY.

By *JOHN WESLEY*, A. M.

THE THIRD EDITION.



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GOD's SOVEREIGNTY.

GOD reveals himself under a two-fold character; as a Creator, and as a Governor. These are no way inconsistent with each other: but they are totally different.

As a Creator he has acted in all things, according to his own Sovereign Will. Juſtice has not, cannot have any place here; for nothing is due to what has no being. Here therefore he may, in the moſt abſolute ſenſe, *do what he will with his own.* Accordingly he created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein, in every conceivable reſpect, *according to his own good pleaſure.* 1. He began his Creation, at what *time*, or rather at what part of Eternity it ſeemed him good. Had it pleaſed him, it might have been millions of years ſooner, or millions of ages later. 2. He determined by his Sovereign Will the *duration* of the univerſe; whether it ſhould laſt ſeven thouſand, or ſeven hundred thouſand, or numberleſs millions of years. 3. By the ſame he appointed the *place* of the univerſe,

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in the immenſity of ſpace. 4. Of his Sovereign Will he determined the *number* of the ſtars, of all the component parts of the univerſe, and the *magnitude* of every atom, of every fixed ſtar, every planet, and every comet. 5. As Sovereign he created the earth, with all the furniture of it, whether animate or inanimate; and gave to each, ſuch a nature, with ſuch properties. 6. Of his own good pleaſure he made ſuch a creature as *Man*, an embodied ſpirit, and in conſequence of his ſpiritual nature, endued with underſtanding, will, and liberty. 7. He hath determined the *times* for every nation to come into being, with the bounds of their *habitation*. 8. He has allotted the time, the place, the circumſtances, for the *birth* of each individual:

" If of parents I came,
" That honour'd thy name,
" 'Twas thy goodneſs appointed it ſo."

9. He has given to each a *body* as it pleased him, weak or strong, healthy or sickly. This implies, 10. That he gives them various degrees of *understanding*, and of *knowledge*, diversified by numberless circumstances. It is hard to say, how far this extends: what an amazing difference there is as to the means of improvement, between one born and brought up in a pious *English* family, and one born and bred among the *Hottentots*. Only we are sure the difference cannot be so great, as to *necessitate* one to be good, or the other to be evil; to *force* one into everlasting glory, or the other into everlasting burnings. This cannot be, because it would suppose the character of God as a Creator, to interfere with God as a Governor: wherein he does not, cannot possibly act, according to his own mere

Sovereign

Sovereign Will; but as he has expreſſly told us, according to the invariable rules both of Juſtice and Mercy.

Whether therefore we can account for it or no, (which indeed we cannot in a thouſand caſes) we muſt abſolutely maintain, That God is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him. But he cannot *reward* the ſun for ſhining, becauſe the ſun is not a free-agent. Neither could he reward us, for letting our light ſhine before men, if we acted as neceſſarily as the ſun. All Reward, as well as all Puniſhment pre-ſuppoſes Free-Agency; and whatever creature is incapable of choice, is incapable of either one or the other.

Whenever therefore God acts as a Governor, as a Rewarder, or Puniſher, he no lon-

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ger acts as a mere Sovereign, by his own ſole will and pleaſure: but as an impartial Judge, guided in all things by invariable Juſtice.

Yet it is true, that in ſome caſes, Mercy rejoices over Juſtice, (although Severity never does. God may *reward* more, but he will never *puniſh* more than ſtrict Juſtice requires.) It may be allowed, that God acts as Sovereign in convincing ſome ſouls of ſin: arreſting them in their mid career, by his reſiſtleſs power. It ſeems alſo that at the moment of our converſion he acts irreſiſtibly: there may likewiſe be many irreſiſtible touches, during the courſe of our Chriſtian warfare; with regard to which every believer may ſay,

" In the time of my diſtreſs,
" Thou haſt my ſuccour been,
" In my utter helpleſſneſs,
" Reſtraining me from ſin."

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But ſtill, as St. Paul might have been either obedient or *diſobedient to the heavenly viſion*, ſo every individual may after all that God has done, either improve his grace, or make it of none effect.

Whatever therefore it hath pleaſed God to do of his Sovereign Pleaſure, as Creator of heaven and earth; and whatever his Mercy may do on particular occaſions, over and above what juſtice requires: the general rule ſtand firm as the pillars of heaven, *The Judge of all the earth* will *do right*. He will *judge the world in righteouſneſs*, and every man therein, according to the ſtricteſt Juſtice. He will puniſh no man, for doing any thing which he could not poſſibly avoid; neither for omitting any thing, which he could not poſſibly do.

Every

Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished. Otherwise to punish him would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our Governor.

Let then these two *Ideas*, of God the Creator, the Sovereign Creator, and God the Governor, the Just Governor, be always kept apart. Let us distinguish them from each other with the utmost care. So shall we give God the full glory of his Sovereign Grace, without impeaching his inviolable Justice.

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